

Virtual InSight (VIS) Will Revolutionize the Milestone Review Process

Dee Aranza



The Army Systems Acquisition Review Council program review process is a complicated and labor-intensive endeavor that extends across the entire acquisition community's spectrum of responsibility and oversight. Program/product managers (PMs) are held accountable for preparing a myriad of programmatic documentation that must be completed at a sufficient level of detail for the milestone decision being sought. The current milestone decision review process (DRP) is extremely complex, requiring coordination and collaboration among a large number of organizations and individuals.

Likewise, programmatic documentation requirements extend across multiple functional areas associated with the acquisition process. There is no consistent business practice or method that PMs can employ to facilitate a smooth and successful milestone decision. Given the dynamic nature of acquisition programs seeking milestone decisions, it became apparent that extensive resources were being expended to manage the DRP associated with all acquisition category (ACAT) I, II and III programs. Further, a survey revealed that there was a variety of custom-developed and commercial products being used by

the community to support the activities associated with the DRP. In some instances, multiple purchases of the same

product were discovered. Inefficiencies are not affordable in today's resource-constrained fiscal climate.

Given the dynamic nature of acquisition programs seeking milestone decisions, it became apparent that extensive resources were being expended to manage the DRP associated with all acquisition category I, II and III programs.

acquisition Information Management (AIM) services infrastructure and will be implemented and managed by PM

In an effort to align the tenets of network-centric enterprise strategies, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology has centrally funded an enterprise commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) solution that will be used throughout the acquisition community to support DRP milestones. VIS will be the standard business practice and method that all Army acquisition programs will be required to use. VIS is an Oracle® Web-based solution that will be compatible with the existing Ac-

quisition, Logistics and Technology Enterprise Systems and Services (ALT-ESS). This COTS product consists of a user-friendly graphical interface and mirrors Microsoft® Windows-like features with drop-down menus.

VIS's principle objective is to implement an enterprise approach/solution that will streamline the activities associated with preparing, coordinating and staffing programmatic documentation required for milestone decision reviews. All individuals associated with the development, coordination, staffing, review and approval of programmatic documentation will have access to VIS. Level of access will be granted based on the individual's role in the programmatic document process.

PM-Level Benefits

Specific PM-level features and benefits that can be realized include:

- *General Project Plan Visibility/Execution Information.* This capability allows users to establish task assignments and improve project visibility through using point of contact roster management, project plan communication, schedule management and electronic notifications.
- *Document Management.* This capability encompasses preparing, coordinating, approving and managing documents involved in milestone reviews along with project/task viewing and monitoring. The tool serves as a central repository for critical program documents and provides PMs the ability to add documents related to the project and

the associated tasks, review and revise milestone documents, route documents for approval and then track approval status, track sources (who and when for updates/revisions), control document access and provide separate working areas for document development and archiving.

- **Issue Management.** This capability provides mechanisms for creating, managing and facilitating issue resolution surfaced throughout the integrated product team (IPT) process. This includes the ability to establish organization-specific business rules, create issues related to the projects/tasks, relate issues to project activity, attach documents to issues as they are routed and track threaded discussions.
- **Internet Meeting.** This capability allows users to collaborate online and reduce the requirement for face-to-face meetings. In addition, a user tool kit provides "how-to" guides for using the tools, document and process templates and online user guide and tutorials.

Other tangible benefits that may accrue from using VIS include a simplified and streamlined milestone documentation process resulting in reduced time for individual milestone document preparation, common tool support to provide document visibility and reduce management effort in preparing consolidated milestone packages. Further benefits include standardized management and preparation to improve visibility and oversight and standardized document templates that reduce training and enhance consistency and general productivity.

Program Executive Office (PEO)-Level Benefits

In addition to the above-mentioned features and benefits that accrue to the PM, the PEO business process will emphasize

other features. The *General Project Plan Visibility/Execution Information* feature will improve the capability to manage and coordinate multiple projects centrally. The *Document Management* capability archival function will be especially handy for accessing the full history of any program. With a collaborative milestone decision process in operation, the *Issue Management* features will provide for early issue visibility and detection. As a complete package to support the PEO milestone decision business process, the *Online User Guide and Tutorial* will be key to the cultural change required to

achieve sufficient levels of user acceptance of centralized acquisition tools.

HQDA-Level Benefits

Time is the acquisition community's most precious resource. VIS implementation — as part of a larger set of coordinated tools — will provide a single COTS-based architecture to reduce development and maintenance costs associated with individual tools proliferated throughout the acquisition community. The resulting database will be a one-stop source for all milestone documentation, providing both current status and program history.

The capability to allow users to collaborate online and reduce the requirement for face-to-face meetings will benefit all players in the milestone DRP and other acquisition business

processes. The *Web Conferencing* and *Collaboration* features will significantly reduce the need for temporary duty (TDY)/travel for working IPTs.

Program/project visibility provided by the *Tracking* feature will reduce the need for TDY for integrating the working IPTs. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Plans, Programs and Resources (DASA (PP&R)) has established a goal for 50-percent reduction in TDY associated with milestone DRPs.

Deployment

The current deployment consists of a 120-day pilot. Up to five programs/projects are targeted for the pilot and will be used as a basis for documenting requirements, configuring the software to support the requirement and developing and tailoring the training requirements. The acquisition community can anticipate VIS rollout beginning in June 2004. Subject matter experts fluent in DRP activities will be integral to successful implementation at each PEO/PM office.

Senior acquisition leaders have expressed their strong support for the VIS effort and will help implement the necessary changes to the current process. All parties recognize the need for improved business practices that would make milestone reviews more effective and efficient over time. Change management will become the watchword for success as the VIS capability is extended to the entire acquisition community.

DEE ARANZA is a Management Analyst for PM ALTESS, PEO Enterprise Information Systems. She attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and serves as a functional liaison to the acquisition community with specific support to the HQDA, DASA (PP&R).

VIS implementation — as part of a larger set of coordinated tools — will provide a single COTS-based architecture to reduce development and maintenance costs associated with individual tools proliferated throughout the acquisition community.